

Message Text

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJ: CABINET FORMATION AS OF APRIL 14

REF: BANGKOK 9319

SUMMARY: THE FORMATION OF THE FOUR-PARTY DEMOCRAT-LED COALITION, WHICH HAD SMOOTH SAILING MOST OF LAST WEEK, HAS RUN INTO SOME STORMY WEATHER RECENTLY. SOME OF THE STORMS ARE CAUSED BY BLUFFING, AS THE PROSPECTIVE PARTNERS IN THE COALITION MANEUVER TO GET THE BEST DEAL POSSIBLE FOR THEMSELVES. OTHERS ARE CAUSED BY BRUISED EGOS OF THOSE MINISTERS WHO FACE THE PROSPECT OF ACCEPTING LESSER JOBS THAN THEY HOPED FOR. STILL OTHERS ARE THE RESULT OF PARTY AND PERSONAL RIVALRIES AND DISLIKES. THE BIGGEST STORM IS CAUSED BY DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES WITHIN THE DEMOCRAT PARTY ITSELF AS TO WHAT EXTENT THE PARTY SHOULD COMPROMISE IN ORDER TO FORM A STABLE COALITION. END SUMMARY.

1. THE OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE FORMATION OF THE FOUR-PARTY COALITION, WHICH WAS SET FOR APRIL 14 (REF A), HAS BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL FRIDAY, APRIL 16. ONE OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE
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FOR THE DELAY WAS THAWIT KLINPRATHUM, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF

THE SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY (SJP), WHO WAS DISSATISFIED WITH THE POST HE WAS OFFERED AND DEMANDED THE AGRICULTURE PORTFOLIO. HE HAD HELD THIS POST IN THE KHUKRIT CABINET. BUT THE DEMOCRATS WANTED IT FOR THEMSELVES IN THE NEW CABINET. HE APPARENTLY HAS RECONSIDERED HIS POSITION AND IS NOW WILLING TO ACCEPT THE PROFFERED MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH POST.

2. ANOTHER REASON FOR THE DELAY WAS INTERNAL DISAGREEMENTS WITHIN THE DEMOCRAT PARTY. THE DEMOCRATS' NEGOTIATING TEAM, COMPOSED OF PARTY LEADER SENI PRAMOT, DEPUTY PARTY LEADERS PHICHAI RATTAKUN AND THAMMANUN THIANG-NGOEN, AND SENIOR PARTY ADVISOR SAWET PIAMPHONGSAN, WILL SUBMIT THE RESULTS OF THEIR NEGOTIATIONS FOR APPROVAL FIRST TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE PARTY ON APRIL 14 AND THEN TO THE 114 DEMOCRAT MP'S, PROBABLY ON APRIL 15. INDICATIONS ARE THAT THAT LEADERS WILL HAVE TO DEFEND THE PROPOSED COALITION AND CABINET AGAINST SEVERE CRITICISMS FROM THE "YOUNG" FACTION OF THE PARTY.

3. MANY OF THE YOUNG DEMOCRATS HAVE NEVER BEEN SANGUINE ABOUT THE INCLUSION OF THE THAI NATION PARTY IN A DEMOCRAT-LED COALITION GOVERNMENT BECAUSE THEY CONSIDER THE THAI NATION PARTY MEMBERS TO BE "NEO-FASCISTS" AND MILITARISTS. THE ALLOCATION OF THE INTERIOR PORTFOLIO TO PRAMAN FURTHER DISMAYED THEM.

4. THESE "YOUNG DEMOCRATS", ALTHOUGH WORRIED ABOUT THE DAMAGE TO THE DEMOCRATS' IMAGE BY ASSOCIATING THEMSELVES WITH THE THAI NATION (TNP), SOCIAL JUSTICE (SJP) AND SOCIAL NATIONALIST (SNP) PARTIES, ACCEPTED THE POLITICAL NECESSITY OF FORMING A COALITION WITH THE LATTER TWO. FURTHERMORE, THE SIZE OF THEIR PARTIES, RELATIVE TO THE DEMOCRATS, WOULD PROBABLY KEEP THEM CONTROLLABLE. THE "YOUNG DEMOCRATS" EVIDENTLY FEARED THAT THE TNP MIGHT SERIOUSLY HINDER OR BLOCK DEMOCRAT POLICIES.

5. THE OLDER DEMOCRATS, ON THE OTHER HAND, SEEM OBSESSED WITH THE NEED TO FORM A COALITION WHICH WOULD BE STABLE. THEY SEEMED TO FEEL THAT THIS MIGHT BE THEIR LAST CHANCE TO RULE, AS A FAILURE OF A DEMOCRAT-LED COALITION COULD HAVE FAR-REACHING EFFECTS. THE OLDER DEMOCRATS WANT TO BE CERTAIN THAT THE SUDDEN

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PULL-OUT OF ONE OF THE PARTIES TO THE COALITION DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS OR ANYTIME THEREAFTER WILL NOT CAUSE THE COALITION ITSELF TO COLLAPSE. TOWARD THIS END THEY SUPPORT FORMATION OF AS BROADLY BASED A COALITION AS POSSIBLE AND ARE WILLING TO CONCEDE A GREAT DEAL TO ACHIEVE THAT END, AS EVIDENCED BY THEIR REPORTED PREPAREDNESS TO LET PRAMAN HAVE THE INTERIOR PORTFOLIO, WHICH THEY HAD EARLIER INDICATED THEY WANTED FOR THEMSELVES. THEY ALSO SEEM TO BELIEVE THAT THEY CAN USE THE

NATURAL ANTAGONISMS AND CONFLICTING AMBITIONS OF THE TNP AND SJP
PARTY LEADERS TO NEUTRALIZE THESE PARTIES AND THUS ALLOW
THE DEMOCRATS TO PURSUE THEIR OWN PROGRAMS AND POLICIES.

6. COMMENT: SOME FURTHER ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS SEEM
LIKELY BEFORE THE CABINET IS FORMED.
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